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Chairman: Mr. Semakula Kiwanuka. . . . . (Uganda)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 85: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (*continued*) (A/55/261, A/55/262, A/55/263, A/55/264, A/55/265, A/55/373 and Add.1, A/55/392-S/2000/874, A/55/432-S/2000/921, A/55/453, A/55/466-S/2000/971, A/55/474-S/2000/984 and A/55/490-S/2000/993; A/C.4/55/L.17, A/C.4/55/L.18, A/C.4/55/L.19, A/C.4/55/L.20 and A/C.4/55/L.21)

1. **Mr. Osei** (Ghana) referred to the statement made in the General Assembly by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of his country, who had noted that obstacles to peace could not be removed without compromise, sacrifices, diplomacy and the strong desire for durable peace. The Minister had gone on to say that both sides should remember that perhaps the finest hour for reaching agreement had arrived, since the negative forces were regrouping, particularly in Israel, and the younger generation in Palestine was growing increasingly impatient. Events in the Middle East over the past few weeks had not only confirmed the worst fears but had also completely undermined the progress that had been made a few months previously in the process of negotiations. It was against that background that the Committee was constrained to consider the report of the Special Committee.

2. His delegation regretted that the report of the Special Committee was of a limited nature. It did not reflect Israel's position, since the Israeli Government had not cooperated with the Special Committee and had not given it access to the occupied territories to obtain first-hand information. Nevertheless, his Government was concerned at the evidence presented in the report. The policy pursued by Israel infringed not only the fundamental human rights of the Palestinians but also the basic tenets of international law and the international standards of human rights, particularly the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the international human rights covenants.

3. His Government viewed with concern the current climate of tension in the Middle East and condemned the cycle of violence systematically perpetrated by extremist elements in both Israel and Palestine whose objective was to prevent any progress towards peace. In that connection, his country had stated clearly in the General Assembly that terrorist acts were totally unacceptable as a means of seeking redress for any grievances, achieving political ends or supporting a cause. His country welcomed the understanding reached between Chairman Arafat and Mr. Peres, the former Israeli Prime Minister, on the basis of the Sharm el-Sheikh understanding, and hoped that it would help usher in an atmosphere of calm and promote sober reflection to engender confidence-building and the restoration of good will which were essential for the resumption of negotiations. The attainment of durable peace also required economic and social stability in the occupied territories.

4. His delegation shared the perception of the Special Committee that it was currently of overwhelming importance to finalize the peace process in a manner satisfactory to all concerned and that the initial steps in that process must take account of the observations and recommendations of the Special Committee in its thirty-second report (A/55/453). The main thrust of that document was the necessity of restoring to the Palestinians their rights to homes, means of livelihood, free mobility, family reunification, education and land.

5. **Mr. Ka** (Senegal) said that the discussion of the Special Committee's report was taking place at a particularly difficult time in the life of the population of the occupied Palestinian territories. The escalation of violence in the occupied territories was a source of serious concern to the international community. As Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, he had recently informed the Security Council, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the participants at the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly of the risk that those developments would disrupt the Middle East peace process. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People had particularly emphasized its position concerning the indiscriminate use of force by the Israeli Defence Forces in dispersing the demonstrations that had followed a particularly provocative visit to Al-Haram Al-Sharif by the leader of the Israeli opposition Mr. Ariel Sharon. President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal had condemned those acts of violence, the main victims of which were the Palestinians.

6. His country had been shaken by the large number of victims in East Jerusalem, Gaza and southern

Lebanon and called on the parties to exercise restraint and to carry out the recommendations of the Sharm el-Sheikh meeting. Senegal considered that it was essential to withdraw from the area of confrontation the forces that had been responsible for the acts of violence and to establish an international commission of inquiry.

7. As before, the Palestinian people was being subjected to various forms of humiliation because of the occupation of its territory, which had already been going on for more than 30 years. His delegation believed that the international community, and especially the Security Council, must redouble confidence-building efforts, in order to restore calm in that important region. In that regard, his country was pleased to note the personal involvement of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who was making every effort to reconcile the positions of the parties. However, in order to restore peace and calm in the region, all sides must play a part, and above all Israel, the occupying Power. Israel had an obligation to secure respect for the holy places and guarantees of protection for the Palestinian population in the occupied territory, including Jerusalem, in accordance with the norms of international law. It must adhere unswervingly to the agreements it had signed and to the norms of international humanitarian law, and also to the relevant provisions of the fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949.

8. In conclusion, the Chairman and members of the Special Committee must be given their due for the work they had done, because the information presented in their report gave an overview of the difficult situation in which the Palestinian people was living, and above all of how its rights were being flouted. As long as those sufferings continued and unlawful acts were being committed, the Special Committee must pursue its important work to restore a just and lasting peace in all the countries of the region, including Israel.

9. The delegation of Senegal understood the despair of the Palestinian people and urged it to do all it could to give one more chance to the peace process. The parties must be brought to the negotiating table again, and a peace agreement concluded as soon as possible.

10. **Mr. Hasmy Agam** (Malaysia) said the Special committee's report clearly highlighted the Israeli practices in the occupied territories, including Jerusalem. The Special Committee had taken great care to ensure that its report was as objective and accurate as possible, based on the sworn testimony of witnesses and taking account of other reliable sources of information, such as the report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights investigating Israeli violations of human rights in the occupied territories and the report of the International Labour Organization. He was sorry that the Government of Israel was not only refusing to cooperate with the Special Committee, but was disparaging its reports every year. If Israel really wanted to see a more "balanced" report to the General Assembly, it should cooperate with the Special Committee by permitting its members to visit the occupied territories, including Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan. He was aware of the cooperation extended to the Special Committee by some Israeli human rights lawyers and activists, who had given valuable testimonies on the plight of Arabs living in the occupied territories, and especially on the demolition of houses and the conditions of detention of Arabs in Israeli prisons.

11. The report clearly indicated that the human rights situation of the Arabs living in the occupied territories had not improved during the period under review. Life under Israeli occupation was characterized by harsh and repressive action by the occupation authorities, affecting virtually every aspect of life in the occupied territories. That included severe restrictions on freedom of movement and on housing, education, public health and sanitation, and economic and political activity. The Israeli occupation relied on draconian laws and measures which were designed to keep the Arab population under strict control and subjugation in the name of Israel's national security. To secure observance of those laws and regulations, the authorities of the occupying Power often employed heavy-handed methods against the Palestinian population, including discriminatory and punitive actions, border closures and searches, house demolitions and restrictions on water supply. What was especially disturbing to the Special Committee was the use of certain forms of torture during the interrogation of Arab detainees and prisoners. That practice was continuing, although it had been declared illegal by the Supreme Court of Israel. All those acts were grave breaches of the rules of international and humanitarian law, including the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949,

which applied to all the occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan.

12. The current tragic situation in the occupied territories, including Jerusalem, convincingly illustrated the fatal consequences of the continuing suppression of the Arab population in the occupied territories, characterized by the excessive use of force by Israeli security forces against largely unarmed Palestinian civilians, mostly youths. As a result of those actions, more than 160 people had died and thousands had been injured. The number of Palestinian casualties, both dead and wounded, attested to the inequality of strength in the present conflict in the occupied territories, including Jerusalem: the entire world had witnessed the use of preponderant and disproportionate force — automatic rifles, tanks, artillery and military helicopters — against Palestinian civilians, including children, who were "armed" with stones and catapults. That was confirmed by the television pictures of the death of a twelve-year-old boy in the arms of his wounded father.

13. Israel's heavy-handed policy towards the Arab population was particularly discernible in East Jerusalem, where Israel was doing all it could to force the Arabs living there to leave the city, which it intended to make its "undivided capital". That policy was carried out through the systematic confiscation of Arab property, the demolition of houses for "security or administrative reasons", the confiscation and cancellation of residence permits, depriving Arabs of the right to live in the city, and other judicial and administrative measures. The objective of that policy was to "Judaize" Arab East Jerusalem by increasing the number of Jewish inhabitants, thereby altering the demographic composition of the city's population. The Arab character of the city was being drastically transformed, inter alia, through the continuous construction and expansion of new Israeli settlements at Jabel Abu Ghneim and Ras Al Mud. The strong criticisms of the international community against the deliberate policy of depopulating Arab East Jerusalem had fallen on deaf ears.

14. The continuing work of the Special Committee was imperative in order to ensure the monitoring of the human rights of Arabs living in the territories occupied by Israel. The annual renewal of the mandate of the Special Committee was a strong manifestation of the continuing support of the international community for the work of the Special Committee, as well as its solidarity with the people of Palestine in its valiant struggle for a sovereign and independent State and with the Syrian Arab Republic in its aspiration for the return of the occupied Syrian Golan. The need for the Special Committee to monitor the situation in the occupied territories would continue for as long as those territories, including Jerusalem and occupied Syrian Golan, remained under the illegal occupation of Israel.

15. His delegation was greatly concerned that the continuing unstable situation in the occupied territories would aggravate the plight of Arabs living under Israeli occupation. He called on Israel to cease its brutal repression of the Palestinian civilians, return to the path of peace and make a serious effort to resuscitate the peace process. Israel must realize that it could not hope to enjoy peace as long as it ignored the legitimate aspiration of the Palestinian people for a just and comprehensive settlement of the conflict on the basis of the "land for peace" principle and for the creation of an independent State of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital, and refused to withdraw Israeli forces from all the occupied Arab lands, including the occupied Syrian Golan. It was not possible to build confidence and the peace process while continuing repression and carrying out a policy of subjugating the Arab population of the occupied territories. The international community could not turn a blind eye to those repressive and unjust actions by Israel. It could not afford to be selective in its approach, criticizing human rights violations in other countries while remaining silent about the violation of human rights in the occupied Arab territories. The international community must take decisive steps to protect the long-suffering population living under occupation.

16. **Mr. Al-Otaibi** (Kuwait) expressed concern that the present Government of Israel was pursuing the same policy as its predecessor, in breach of resolutions of the United Nations and of agreements concluded with the Palestinian administration. Moreover, according to information in the report of the Special Committee, the present Government of Israel had issued more permits for the building of settlements than the previous administration. The policy of "Judaization" of Jerusalem was continuing, along with the withdrawal of identity cards, the demolition of houses, the detention of individuals and the isolation of entire regions. The result was to exacerbate the socio-economic situation of the inhabitants of the occupied Arab territories.

17. Kuwait wished to reiterate its position of principle that the Palestinian people had a right to self-determination in its territory with a capital in Jerusalem. In the most recent resolution adopted at the summit meeting of Arab States, it had been decided to establish two funds to assist the families of Palestinian martyrs who had perished during the uprising.

18. In conclusion, he declared his country's support for the work of the Special Committee and the efforts to put an end to the pressure exerted by the Government of Israel. The authority of the United Nations must be preserved by implementing its resolutions. It was to be hoped that those resolutions would make it possible to achieve lasting peace on the basis of the "land for peace" principle and the withdrawal of the Israeli occupying forces from all the occupied territories.

19. **Mr. Fadaifard** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that during the period under review Israel had continued to commit numerous violations of the rules of international humanitarian law in the occupied territories. Contrary to existing international legal norms and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, it had continued acts such as the desecration of Islamic holy places, restrictions on the freedom of movement of the Palestinians, the building of new settlements and the expansion of existing ones, and unjustified detentions.

20. The excessive and indiscriminate use of force by the Israeli occupying army against the Palestinian civilians in the past few weeks was a gross violation of human rights. The brutal massacre of Palestinian children and youths by Israeli soldiers was not acceptable. By its provocative measures, Israel had fanned the flames of Palestinian anger, and the Palestinian people was currently trying to demonstrate its resistance to the oppressive measures. All those tragic events, and the bloody campaign against the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, had again highlighted the need to continue the activities of the Special Committee. The Committee must remain part of the United Nations, which had a permanent responsibility for solving the question of Palestine.

21. The present situation in the occupied territories was a serious violation of the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which applied to all the occupied territories. In that light it was extremely important that the occupying Power should accept that the Convention was applicable and implement its provisions in full. For its part, the international community must immediately take steps to stop the brutal campaign unleashed by the Israeli armed forces against civilians.

22. **Mr. Alharthy** (Saudi Arabia) observed that the members of the Special Committee had been unable to visit the occupied territories in order to acquaint themselves at first hand with the human rights situation, because of resistance on the part of the Israeli authorities.

23. The serious breaches of the human rights of the Arab population of the occupied Arab territories testified to Israel's intransigent position. Israel was disregarding existing international treaties, conventions and resolutions. The entire world was witness to the blockade of the territories and the bloody massacres, as a result of which dozens of people had died and thousands had been injured. In order to conceal the grave breaches it had committed, Israel was attempting to place the entire blame on the Palestinian people, which was merely seeking to liberate its territory, exercise its right to self-determination and establish its own State with Jerusalem as its capital. The only means available to the Palestinians was the *intifadah*, in the course of which children throwing stones were opposed by the soldiers of the occupying forces, using powerful military technology — armoured carriers, missiles, tanks, aircraft and other weapons.

24. The policy of oppression affected all aspects of the lives of the Palestinian and Syrian population in the occupied territories. In order to consolidate their control, the Israeli authorities had introduced wholly unwarranted restrictions on the granting of permits for the building and reconstruction of houses in the occupied territories. It was another matter when it came to issuing permits for building new settlements, which was being done in breach of all the international conventions. Those settlements were actually being built in order to alter the demographic composition of the population of the occupied regions and to create hotbeds of tension or confrontation which would undermine the peace process. At the same time, the inhabitants of the settlements were armed to the teeth, so that they were able to terrorize and intimidate the local population and thus achieve their goal of colonizing the region. Another problem was the water supply, which was used mainly by the settlers. There were other examples of actions by Israel which ran

counter to international human rights treaties and conventions, and to the provisions of the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

25. He emphasized that his delegation supported all serious efforts to achieve a comprehensive and just peace in accordance with the norms of international law, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and with the "land for peace" principle. Peace in the region could be achieved only by means of scrupulous implementation of those resolutions, on condition that the Israeli occupation forces withdrew from all the occupied territories, including the Lebanese territories and the Syrian Golan, and that the Palestinian people was granted the right to self-determination and the right to live in its own territories with a capital in Jerusalem.

26. In conclusion, he said that the Special Committee must continue its work for as long as the Israeli occupation and Israel's illegal actions against the Arab population continued.

27. **Mr. Tekaya** (Tunisia) thanked the Special Committee for the report that had been submitted. It contained detailed information concerning the continuing Israeli practice of human rights violation in the occupied Palestinian territories, which went against all international instruments and primarily the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and the United Nations resolutions.

28. The report also contained information regarding the continued policy of occupation and colonization, which was contrary to the agreements reached with the Palestinian party within the framework of the Middle East peace process. Israel was continuing to confiscate agricultural lands and to use them for the construction of settlements and roads. At the same time, Israel had introduced restrictions on the expansion of Palestinian housing in the occupied territories.

29. The Special Committee pointed out that the Israeli authorities had introduced a number of laws and regulations which affected all aspects of the lives of Palestinians and Syrians in the occupied territories. Furthermore, the Israeli authorities were as usual shutting their eyes to the situation which had developed in the territories and which ran entirely counter to internationally recognized norms and values.

30. In recent months there had been bitter clashes in which the Israeli forces had used weapons, aircraft and tanks against peaceful civilians who were protesting against the occupation and the policy of "fait accompli". As a result of those clashes many defenceless people had suffered, among them young people and children. At the emergency meeting of the Security Council held afterwards, two resolutions had been adopted in which the United Nations had once again affirmed the importance of its role in the region.

31. At present the situation remained extremely explosive. It was imperative to defuse the tension caused by the occupation and colonization. The international community must provide for the protection of peaceful Palestinian citizens in accordance with international norms and regulations, and specifically the provisions of the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. He appealed to the international community to encourage efforts to achieve a just and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian problem, guaranteeing the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to establish an independent State with a capital in Jerusalem. Otherwise, a just and lasting peace in the Middle East would be impossible.

32. **Mr. Al-Raisi** (Oman) said that Israel's policy of oppression of Palestinians and other Arabs in all the occupied territories, manifested particularly in the establishment of new and the expansion of existing settlements, contraction of the autonomous zone, cruel treatment of prisoners and closure of border regions, was a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and other international instruments, particularly the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. That policy was also reflected in the fact that members of the Special Committee had not been allowed to visit the occupied territories.

33. Oman fully supported the resolutions of the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights regarding the matter under discussion and stated that it was necessary to take urgent measures to implement them, so as to end the bloodletting in the occupied territories and to guarantee the Arab population at least their minimum rights, beginning with the right to life.

34. Oman fully supported the right of the Palestinian people to establish its own State with a capital in Jerusalem, whose occupation it would never accept. Israel must end its policy of oppression and its practice of persecuting the population of the occupied territories. Israel should be required to cooperate with

the Special Committee in implementing the resolutions which had been adopted.

35. **Ms. Idris** (Brunei Darussalam) said that her country was deeply concerned about the current situation in Palestine, especially in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Brunei Darussalam hoped that both parties would exercise maximum restraint and resume peaceful negotiations, and in that regard called on the parties concerned to respect the understanding they had reached during the recent Summit at Sharm el-Sheikh, in order to put the peace process back on track.

36. Brunei Darussalam noted with concern that Israel continued to violate the rights of the Palestinians and other Arabs of the occupied territories, as was apparent from the report of the Special Committee. Israel's policy and practice had a negative effect on all aspects of the lives of the Palestinians. In that connection, her country urged Israel to lift the restrictions on the supply of water, the ownership of land and the building of housing, as well as to permit freedom of movement.

37. Brunei Darussalam was also concerned about Israel's continuing practice of confiscating Palestinian lands and demolishing houses belonging to Palestinians. It was regrettable that Israel was continuing to expand its settlements, since those activities were not only illegal in character but also undermined the peace process.

38. Also causing concern was the fact that the Israeli authorities were continuing their ill-treatment of Palestinian prisoners. In that context, Brunei Darussalam urgently called on Israel to comply with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the recent Security Council resolution 1322 (2000) and General Assembly resolution ES-10/7. Furthermore, Brunei Darussalam urged the Israeli authorities fully to comply with their obligations under the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and its Additional Protocol of 1977.

39. In light of the worsening situation in the Middle East, Brunei Darussalam would continue to support all efforts to achieve a comprehensive and lasting peace in the region, which was possible only if the parties concerned met their obligations in respect of various United Nations resolutions in which the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people were recognized. In conclusion, she once again expressed support for the legitimate struggle of the Palestinians for peace and freedom, and for the establishment of the Palestinian state.

40. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Bangladesh) noted from the comprehensive and informative report, that in the period under review Israel had continued its policy of repression in the occupied territories. In addition, in the past few weeks the world had witnessed an indiscriminate campaign of repression unleashed by the Israeli forces against unarmed Palestinians, as a result of which some 150 persons had been killed, two thirds of whom had been children under 18.

41. His delegation was concerned that in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories Israel was continuing its policy of settlement, confiscation of land, arrests, torture and other repressive measures. Such a policy systematically violated the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and international agreements and treaties. The foreign occupation in itself constituted a flagrant violation of human rights. Prolonged occupation only worsened the situation. Apart from the use of violence to suppress civil resistance, Israel was conducting a well-planned campaign aimed at demoralizing the people of the occupied territories with a view to perpetuating its illegal occupation under various pretexts. The effects of Israel's policy of economic blockade and collective punishment had, as in the past, been devastating.

42. The practice of establishing Israeli settlements in the occupied territories had been and would continue to be a source of tension. Israel was encouraging Jewish settlement and was demolishing Palestinian homes. Instead of freezing and winding up the creation of settlements, new ones were being established, including the one at Jabal Abu Ghneim in East Jerusalem, with the ultimate goal of changing the demographic composition of the city. Israel's policy of confiscating land, restricting access to water resources and destroying homes in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories, including the Golan, would in no way bring the desired peace to the region.

43. Bangladesh expressed its utter condemnation of the Israeli policy of systematic violation of basic human rights in the occupied territories. In that connection, Israel should be reminded that under the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which the Security Council had on numerous occasions reaffirmed was applicable to the territories occupied by Israel since 1967 including Jerusalem, it was obliged to guarantee

the basic human rights of the people under its occupation. Israel's actions also were in contravention of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

44. Israel's practices in the occupied territories were, for the people and Government of Bangladesh, a subject of grave concern. In that regard, Bangladesh expressed its full solidarity with its Palestinian and Arab brothers, and fully endorsed the recommendations of the Special Committee with a view to safeguarding the basic human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs in the occupied territories.

45. As a sponsor of the draft resolutions submitted under the agenda item, Bangladesh called for their adoption by consensus.

46. **Mr. Al-Zayani** (Bahrain) said that the report of the Special Committee contained reliable information which bore witness to the worsening of the situation in the occupied territories, which had recently been aggravated further by Israel's violent acts. Israel's unwillingness to renounce its policy of establishing settlements in Palestinian and other occupied Arab territories was in complete contradiction with international instruments, a fact that had frequently been emphasized in Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. At its tenth emergency special session, the General Assembly had once again reaffirmed that the occupation of Palestinian territories was illegal, and had called upon Israel immediately to desist from all its illegal actions. The Security Council in resolution 1322 (2000) had called upon Israel to abide by its obligations under the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and to ensure the protection of the civilian population. That Convention applied to all territories occupied by Israel since 1967.

47. The Israeli settlers were hostile to the population of the occupied territories. As stated in paragraph 44 of the report, the Israeli army systematically supported the settlers in taking Palestinian-owned land. That poisoned relations with the Arab population, in particular the population of the Golan and, as stated in paragraph 62 of the report, the relation between settlers and Palestinians was one of the most unfortunate consequences of the occupation. The number of Israeli settlers had increased in the past year, as had the number of settlements.

48. The occupation authorities were continuing to take steps against the population of the occupied territories, thus blocking any peaceful settlement. Peace was a strategic choice. The Millennium Summit had emphasized the need to achieve just and lasting peace all over the world in accordance with the United Nations Charter, and had also emphasized the right to self-determination of colonial peoples. In order to achieve a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East, it was necessary to ensure the full observance of Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the provisions of all international instruments and the principle of "land for peace".

49. Observance of human rights and improvement of the situation in the occupied territories could never be achieved until the atrocious occupation of all the Arab territories was completely ended and the Palestinian people could exercise its inalienable rights, including the right to establish its own State on its territory with a capital in Jerusalem.

50. **Mr. Zohar** (Israel) said that he felt it his duty to query the continued existence of the Special Committee, whose activity was inconsistent with the joint efforts made in recent years by Israel and the Palestinians to resolve their differences through negotiation.

51. The Special Committee's report repeated the usual litany of irrelevant accusations against his country, ignoring the fact that practically all Palestinians currently lived under Arab flags, many under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority. Thus, if the Palestinians had grievances concerning the violation of human rights, they should direct them to the Palestinian Authority and the Governments of the relevant Arab countries.

52. For that reason, Israel rejected the report and would vote against it. Moreover, it called on the Fourth Committee either to close down the Special Committee or to redefine its mandate and insist that it investigate the way in which the Palestinians had been treated for half a century by all the Arab regimes in the Middle East.

53. In reply to the observations of a number of speakers, his country wished to point out that de facto it recognized the principles of the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949; that was why it permitted the representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross to operate in the territories in accordance with that Convention.

54. The United Nations now had a list of urgent tasks, as spelled out in the Millennium Declaration, which warranted the fullest attention of the Organization. He found it difficult to understand why so much time, energy and public funds should continue to be wasted on the activity of the Special Committee, to the detriment of far more pressing matters in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

55. The Millennium Summit had exhorted all States to seek the peaceful resolution of disputes and to plan post-conflict peace-building and reconstruction. In its report, the Special Committee did not address a single one of those key aims and he therefore called on the members of the Fourth Committee to vote against the report or, at least, to abstain in the vote.

56. At the Camp David meeting in July 2000, Israel had made a serious effort to reach an agreed peace settlement with the Palestinians. For the first time in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, there had been discussion of such sensitive issues as Jerusalem, refugees, borders and settlements. Unfortunately, the Palestinian side had not reciprocated those efforts by Israel, apparently because it was not yet ready for a final and complete reconciliation with Israel as a permanent neighbour. Nevertheless, Israel remained committed to the goal of peace.

57. Over the past few weeks, the world had witnessed an intense outbreak of violence not seen in recent years. That violence had been initiated by the Palestinians for one purpose: to create a different reality which would coerce Israel into making further concessions.

58. It was self-evident that responsibility for that highly regrettable situation lay firmly with the Palestinian Authority and Chairman Arafat. Rather than normalizing the situation, the Palestinian Authority and its leadership merely aggravated passions and did not impose their authority to put an end to hostilities. The Israeli forces, in contrast, showed great restraint and rarely initiated action, but rather responded to life-threatening situations. Israel wanted an end to the fighting, but was unconvinced that the Palestinians shared the same commitment.

59. It was, in any case, the destiny of Israelis and Palestinians to live next to one another. Israel had already demonstrated its willingness to go a long way towards achieving peace, and it was now for the Palestinian leadership to act. The Israelis sincerely hoped that the Palestinians would abandon the path of violence and join them whole-heartedly in an effort to create a peaceful future for generations to come. It was clearly now incumbent on the Palestinians and their supporters in the Arab and Moslem countries to prove that they genuinely sought good-neighbourly relations with Israel. They needed peace no less than Israel, since the alternatives were far worse, as could currently be witnessed.

60. **Mr. Bigot** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union and also of Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, said that the Heads of State and Government of the countries of the European Union, meeting in Biarritz on 13 October, had adopted a substantial declaration on the developing situation in the occupied territories and in Israel.

61. The dramatic events, which had led to the death of more than 180 people, had demonstrated the fragility of the peace process. The European leaders had called on the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to stop the violence. The European Union was pleased to note that both sides remained strongly committed to peace. The peace negotiations had to resume. Only peace would provide a remedy for the Palestinians and ensure the security of Israel within its internationally recognized borders and the peaceful cohabitation of two States on the territory of mandated Palestine.

62. The interim agreements must also be fully implemented. From September 1999 to March 2000 encouraging progress had been made in the implementation of the memorandum agreed upon at Sharm el-Sheikh: the transfer of some territories to the Palestinian Authority, the release of prisoners, the opening of the Hebron-Gaza safe passage, and the decision on the reconstruction of the port of Gaza. Consequently, despite the active continuation of the settlement policy, the situation in the Palestinian territories had improved significantly. Unfortunately, that agreement had not been fully respected. The permanent status negotiations must also resume. The European Union welcomed the courage of the Israelis and the Palestinians for having entered that essential stage of negotiations in a spirit of compromise and for having proposed daring solutions.

63. It was important that Israeli practices in the occupied territories should respect international humanitarian law. In recent weeks, the European Union

had frequently condemned the excessive use of force and reprisals. It regretted the blockade of the territories, the limitations on free circulation, the obstacles to humanitarian relief and to the activities of United Nations agencies such as UNRWA. Such operations were in contravention of the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

64. The Union welcomed the fact that the parties had agreed to establish a fact-finding committee, and hoped that it would be able to clarify the responsibilities of all for the violence. On the subject of the United Nations protection force proposed by the Observer for Palestine, the European Union wished to stress that draft resolution A/C.4/55/L.20, in particular its thirteenth preambular paragraph, had no implication for the European Union's position concerning the proposal currently before the Security Council.

65. The issue of the settlements was at the heart of the difficulties of the peace process. Despite the commitments made by the Israeli Government, most of the 42 "new settlement points" which had been installed without authorization during the Israeli electoral campaign of 1999 had been maintained and developed. According to data from the Israeli Bureau of Statistics, the rate of construction during the first quarter of 2000 had increased by 81 per cent. Settlements in Jerusalem, to the south west of Nablus and between Jerusalem and Bethlehem had continually been expanded, with the aim of making definitive some settlements to the west of the "green line" and to control water resources.

66. Nevertheless, the European Union considered the action taken by the Special Committee was not the best way of dealing with those various issues. It would have been preferable to address them in another context that would be more favourable to the spirit of compromise and mutual understanding.

67. The European Union reiterated its commitment to the peace process and to a just and comprehensive settlement on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and of the Madrid and Oslo agreements. The Union reiterated its readiness to contribute to a final settlement between the parties.

68. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, referred to the statement by the representative of Israel, who had expressed doubt as to the usefulness of the Special Committee. The need for the Special Committee was confirmed by what was happening in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. The excessive and indiscriminate use of force by the Israeli occupying forces against the Palestinian civilian population was just one of Israel's many violations of international law, including the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, to which the Israeli Government paid lip service but which it in fact violated on a daily basis. The anachronism was the Israeli occupation and not the Special Committee, which was endeavouring objectively to monitor the constant violations of the rights of an entire population by the occupying Power and to keep the international community informed of them.

69. The statement by the representative of Israel that practically all Palestinians were living under Arab flags was another attempt to exonerate the Israeli Government from blame for the suffering of the Palestinian population living under Israeli occupation. Israel was the occupying Power and the illegal occupation was the source of all the other violations. At the same time, the representative of Israel clearly had no desire directly and seriously to acknowledge and address the problem of the occupation.

70. **Mr. Zaki** (Egypt), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that at the previous meeting the representative of Israel, under the pretext of the right of reply, had made a complete statement and that the intervention he had just made was full of contradictions. Israel maintained that it wanted to live in peace but was doing everything possible to undermine peace. The representative of Israel maintained that practically all Palestinians lived under the Arab flags, but refused to acknowledge that the authorities of his own country had invaded towns and villages which had been fully transferred to the Palestinian Authority under agreements signed with Israel. Israel could at any time overrun any Palestinian town or village, whether in Gaza or in the West Bank, to say nothing of Jerusalem.

71. The representative of Israel was trying to portray his own country as a victim and the Palestinians as being guilty of the violence. However, one only had to watch television to understand who was responsible for the violence. At the recent summit of Arab States it had again been stated that there was no alternative to peace in the region. However, in order to attain such peace, it was absolutely essential for Israel to recognize its obligations. That presupposed withdrawal from all the

occupied territories: from Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan.

72. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, pointed out that it was quite natural that Israel should repudiate the work and report of the Special Committee and should call on the Members of the United Nations to vote against the resolutions of the Special Committee. The Israeli delegation did not want the international community to have objective, accurate, documented and unbiased information about the crimes committed by the Israelis against the Arab population of the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories. In that way, Israel would be able to continue to kill and oppress with impunity.

73. It was true that many Palestinians lived in various Arab countries (just as they lived in other countries of the world). However, the representative of Israel had not given the reason, which was that since 1948 Israel had been conducting a systematic policy to expel, evict and oppress the Palestinian people.

74. The representative of Israel had referred to the importance of implementing the provisions of the Millennium Declaration. The question was, however, whether Israel was ready to give practical effect to the provisions of the Declaration which indicated that it was essential to ensure that refugees were able to return home in dignity. Since 1948, Israel had refused to implement the resolutions of the United Nations and had not been complying with the norms of international law, including humanitarian law.

75. The road to peace had been opened by Arabs, and not by Israel. Israel did not aspire to a just and comprehensive peace as did the Arabs, supported by the international community. Israel was preaching not the principle of "land for peace" but the principle of "both land and peace". The most blatant contradiction between the statement by the representative of Israel and reality was the continuing killing of Palestinians who were defending their lives and their future because they had the same right to life as any other people on earth.

76. Killing people, destroying homes, shelling populated areas, and using tanks and military aircraft were not the way to achieve peace. Israel should implement Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and, on the basis of the "land for peace" principle, should withdraw from all the occupied territories in Palestine, southern Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. If Israel wanted a lasting and just peace, it should comply with international legality and observe the principle of justice. The Arabs, for their part, had made their strategic choice: peace.

Organization of work

77. **The Chairman** drew the attention of the members of the Committee to the proposed new arrangements for the consideration of agenda item 86, entitled "Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects". Consideration of that item would begin with a statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, after which delegations would be able to put questions to him. The general exchange of views on the item would begin at the next meeting thereafter. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to proceed accordingly.

78. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.